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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIRKUK 000004

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#) [KDP](#)

SUBJECT: (U) KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS TO UNITE

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REASON: 1.4 (b)

1. (U) INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) announced January 7 that they had reached agreement on uniting the two Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) administrations in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. The announcement was made by KRG President and KDP leader Masoud Barzani along with PUK politburo member Kosrat Rasoul Ali. The allocation of leadership posts is reported below. END INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.

(SBU) KURDS (FINALLY) ANNOUNCE UNIFIED REGIONAL GOVERNMENT  
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2. (SBU) Following a meeting between KDP and PUK politburo delegations, hosted by President Barzani at his headquarters in Salahaddin, Erbil province, Barzani appeared on Kurdish TV January 7 with the PUK head of delegation, Kosrat Rasoul Ali. They announced that:

-- The two parties had agreed to merge their separate KRG administrations (in Erbil: KDP-dominated; in Sulaymaniyah: PUK-dominated). The long-awaited agreement will be presented to the Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA) for approval after the Eid al-Adha holiday (January 10-13).

-- Erbil will be the capital. (The KNA is already based there.)

-- Implementation is to commence by early February: after the KNA approves the agreement, the Prime Minister will need a couple of weeks to form his Cabinet and submit it to the KNA for approval.

-- The KRG expects the status of Kirkuk to be resolved before the next KNA election. (In other words, the KRG expects Kirkuk to be part of the Kurdistan Region by then. According to the new Iraqi Constitution, the status of Kirkuk and other disputed territories is to be settled before the end of 2007. The KNA was elected in January 2005 for a four-year term.)

(U) WHO GETS WHAT  
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3. (SBU) According to Kurdish media reports and Kurdish contacts, the senior posts in the new, unified KRG will be divided as follows:

-- Masoud Barzani (KDP) - President (no change)

-- Kosrat Rasoul Ali (PUK) - Vice President (new position)

-- Nechirvan Barzani (KDP) - Prime Minister (Nechirvan, Masoud's nephew, is the KRG-Erbil Prime Minister. He will serve two years, i.e. through 2007. PUK had been insisting on a one-year rotation)

-- Omar Fattah (PUK) - Deputy Prime Minister (new position; he is the KRG-Sulaymaniyah Prime Minister)

-- Adnan Mufti (PUK) - Speaker, Kurdistan National Assembly (no change)

-- Dr. Kamal Kirkukli (KDP) - Deputy Speaker, KNA (no change)

-- The PUK will hold the ministries of Development and Planning, Education, Endowment and Religious Affairs, Health, Human Rights, Interior, Justice, Reconstruction, Social Affairs, Communications, and Water Resources.

-- The KDP will hold the ministries of Agriculture and Irrigation, Culture, Electricity, Finance, Higher Education, Martyrs, Municipalities, Natural Resources, Peshmerga Affairs, Region (Regional Affairs, explained to us as dealing with issues of disputed territory), and Sport and Youth.

-- Smaller parties/ethnic or religious groups will get the following ministries: Environment (Kurdistan Islamic Group), Industry (Turcomans), Tourism (Chaldo-Assyrians), and Transportation (Communist Party). (NOTE: The last portfolio is according to a source close to the KDP; press reports had it going to the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU), which seemed surprising, given that the KIU chose to run separately from the KDP/PUK-led Kurdistan Alliance list in the December national elections. END NOTE.)

-- The KDP and PUK reaffirmed their support for PUK leader Jalal Talabani to remain President of Iraq.

-- We have heard unsubstantiated speculation that the PUK might also get a sweetener such as the post of Iraqi Foreign Minister for Barham Saleh, the current Iraqi Minister of Planning (vice Hoshiyar Zebari of KDP).

(U) LONG-AWAITED YET SURPRISING

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14. (SBU) PRT Deputy Team Leader met on January 8 with Kirkuk Provincial Council Chairman Rizgar Ali Hamajan (PUK) and Governor Abdulrahman Mustafa (nominally independent Kurd). Both seemed genuinely pleased by the announcement, but neither had any substantive comments. The parties had professed to be very close to agreement for so long that this breakthrough appears to have caught even some insiders by surprise. A KRG-Erbil minister who is generally very open with Western diplomats made no mention of it during a conversation January 7. Just a few weeks ago, a senior PUK official had flatly told us that talk of unification was "just public relations."

(U) COMMENT

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15. (C) This agreement will no doubt strengthen the Kurds' hand in the negotiations over formation of the new Iraqi government, and it responds to popular demand. The PUK backed down from some of its demands, including one-year rotation of the Prime Ministership and ensuring that no one party got both the Prime Minister and Finance Minister. A lot of mutual distrust still needs to be overcome if the two main parties are to succeed in merging their interior ministries and their peshmerga (military) forces.

BELL